

Vermont State Board of Education Monthly Report – December 2009

From the Chair

At its meeting on December 15, 2009, the State Board of Education addressed the following topics:

Opportunity to Learn (Report of the Education Transformation Policy Commission) – Members of the Education Transformation Policy Commission delivered their final report to the Board. The commission was charged in early 2009 with proposing key policy actions that could support transformation. Entitled *Opportunity to Learn*, the report focuses on how every student can attain 21st century skills when provided with focused and personalized opportunities for learning. The report is organized into five policy sections and addresses many specific policy actions, including 21st century skills and revising the Vermont Framework, multiple ways of learning, learning outside of school, greater interdisciplinary learning, routine early college opportunities, multi-age small learning communities, learning focused on deep understanding of concepts rather than content details, proficiency-based grading and graduation and true personalization. The recommendations also address setting new standards for education quality and educator quality, as well as recommendations for school district consolidation as a means of achieving greater efficiency and economy.

The State Board will continue discussion on the report at its January 19, 2010 meeting. The report is posted on the Department of Education Web site: http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/dept/transformation/commission_resources.html.

Essex Town Supervisory District Boundary Study – The Board approved the Commissioner's recommendation not to regroup the Essex Town Supervisory District at this time. Citing current efforts on the topic of statewide school district consolidation, Vilaseca explained that changing district boundaries in a piecemeal fashion was haphazard and non-productive. The decision allows the Essex Town Board to resume its search for a permanent superintendent. To see the complete study, see: http://education.vermont.gov/new/pdfdoc/board/packet_archives/packet_09_1117/item_G.pdf.

Addison Northwest Supervisory Union –

The State Board approved the October 6, 2009 report of the Addison Northwest Supervisory Union Unified Union School District Planning Committee. This action allows the supervisory union board to put before the voters of the five member communities the question of whether or not to consolidate those districts into one unified union school district. The Addison Northwest Supervisory Union comprises five town/city school districts: Addison, Ferrisburgh, Panton, Vergennes and Waltham, and two union school districts (Vergennes Union Elementary School District #44 comprising the member districts of Panton, Vergennes and Waltham; and the Vergennes Union High School District #5 comprising the member districts of Addison, Ferrisburgh, Panton, Vergennes and Waltham). The formation of a unified union district would result in the elimination of all the above school districts and create a single entity with one common board and administration. The newly-formed district would be more efficient and economical and would provide the students with a fuller and more coordinated array of alternatives for their K-12 education. To see the planning committee report, go to http://education.vermont.gov/new/pdfdoc/board/packet_archives/packet_09_1215/item_J.pdf.

From the Board **Strategic Planning**

The Board and the Department continue the Strategic Plan development work begun at its June 22-23 planning meeting. 16 V.S.A. §180 requires a strategic plan and that it be reviewed and updated every five years (this is the 5th year). The strategic plan (the mission, vision, goals,) will reflect current practice and views, assure that all students graduate from high school globally competitive, and integrate the tenets of the Transformation initiative. To see the most recent work of the Board's strategic planning sub-committee, see http://education.vermont.gov/new/pdfdoc/board/packet_archives/packet_09_1215/item_G.pdf

From the Commissioner

Race to the Top Application Update – The decision has been made to move Vermont's *Race to the Top* (RttT) application, under

ARRA, to Round 2 of the competition, due on June 1, 2010. A number of factors contributed to this conclusion, not the least of which is a continued commitment to use this opportunity to develop a coherent model for implementing transformative educational structures and practices to ensure raised expectations and opportunities for learning success for all Vermont children. High levels of engagement from multiple stakeholders at this point are critical to the success of this effort and ultimately to the success of our children. The 60-day timeframe for Round 1 did not allow for this. Also, in the final RFP as publicized on November 12th, there are no disincentives to applying in Round 2. For Vermont in fact, the additional five months to prepare could bring significant advantages in strengthening our proposal. During the past month, the Department's four assurance teams have been working on further defining expectations and priorities for the proposal and will be reaching out to partners and educators and administrators in the field to collaborate with us in defining the scope of work to be done via the *RttT* award. The next statewide steering committee meeting will be scheduled for late January to review the work done to date. Please contact Deputy Commissioner Rae Ann Knopf (Rae.Knopf@state.vt.us) for additional information.

From the Department

High School Completion Program Legislative Changes – The High School Completion Program, established by Act 176, is now able to serve students still enrolled in high school. Administrators may have experience working through this program with un-enrolled students. There are some differences regarding reimbursement for services and the school's responsibilities in the context of enrollment status and attendance. This option makes available a valuable, flexible pathway to graduation for those students who are deemed eligible and would be an appropriate fit. More specific information regarding students receiving special education services will be available soon. View additional information at http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/pgm_hsi/high_school_completion.html.

Contact Information:

For general questions about the High School Completion Program, contact Tom Alderman at (802) 828-3134 or tom.alderman@state.vt.us. For questions about high school enrollment and attendance issues, contact Glenn Bouchard at (802) 828-1262 or glenn.bouchard@state.vt.us. For questions about the interaction between this program and special education services, contact John Spinney at (802) 828-5127 or john.spinney@state.vt.us.

Vermont Special Education Advisory Council

The Vermont Special Education Advisory Council advises the Vermont Department of Education of unmet educational needs of children who have disabilities. Specifically, the council comments about:

- Proposed regulatory changes
- Data and reports
- Policies involving service coordination
- Corrective actions defined by the federal monitoring process
- The education of eligible students with disabilities who are incarcerated.

The council communicates with the State Board of Education, the General Assembly, other state councils, consumer organizations and task forces. Its work guides family-centered systemic policies and practices within education and promotes communities where diverse individuals live, play, learn and work together and are respected and appreciated. Council membership is defined by state and federal legislation. The governor appoints members for three-year terms, the majority of whom must be persons with disabilities or parents/guardians of children with disabilities. For more information, contact: Ernie Wheeler (Ernest.Wheeler@state.vt.us), or go to <http://education.vermont.gov/vseac/>.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

(ARRA) – Funds provided through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) provide a unique opportunity to jump start school reform and improvement efforts while also saving and creating jobs and stimulating the economy. These one-time

resources should be spent in ways most likely to lead to improved results for students, long-term gains in school and school system capacity, and increased productivity and effectiveness. The following link serves as the main clearinghouse for information for Vermont's education community: http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/dept/recovery_act.html. For additional information, contact Rae Ann Knopf, (802) 828-5101, or Rae.Knopf@state.vt.us.

For additional information on upcoming Department of Education sponsored events for Fall 2009, visit <http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/dept/calendar.html>. The calendar is updated regularly.

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For more information on the Vermont State Board of Education, visit:
<http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/mainboard.html>.

To view approved minutes of SBE meetings:
<http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/board/schedule.html#approved>

To view State Board of Education's Monthly Reports:
http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/board/schedule.html#monthly_reports

2009-2010 State Board of Education Meeting Dates: November 17; December 15; January 19; February 16; March 16; April TBD; May 18; June TBD

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